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THE ALPINE GARDEN FROM AN EDUCATIONAL POINT OF VIEW.

The difficulty in this subject is not how to begin, but where to begin, for there is neither beginning nor middle nor end to a subject that is all education, from the puzzled wonder of the child to the experience of extreme old age, repeating to the last with Michael Angelo, "still I learn."

A garden! the ideal of the fulness of rest and happiness to all toiling humanity, from the garden of Eden to the *amaranth asphodel* and *moly* of the Elysian fields—

> "Resting weary limbs at last on beds of *asphodel*."—*Tennyson.*

to the depths beneath the earth of the Scandinavian Hellheim, where humanity still crept for shelter beneath the roots of Iggdrasil, the great ash-tree.

Or, leaving the outside world with its hanging gardens of Babylon, its rose gardens of Sharon, the gardens of olives, or the deep cyprus bowers of Italy, shall we turn to our own England, the home of varying beauty, perhaps the ideal land for gardening in the whole world. Even here the educational subject is too great—could we dismiss Chaucer with a word, or the red and white roses that convulsed England with a paragraph. Would not inspiration possess us and shelve the article for a month while we painted an immortal picture of Shakespeare planting his mulberry-tree? Or, the reverie would be too long over hapless Mary Stuart gardening in her early, bright days in her garden on the lake with :—

> "Mary Beatoun and Mary Seatoun,
> And Mary Carmichael and me."

No, we must leave Evelyn and Sylva and old English pleasaunces for another time, and steadily confine our attention to the Alpine Garden, springing into birth under our own eyes, the last development of taste culture mental and physical, and the great travel resources of civilisation.

Nursed in a garden, and as an earliest recollection, holding an umbrella under the *roses* for a flower-devoted mother to shake the *rose* leaves into, to be dried for the scent in the tall drawing-room vase—as was the fashion in those days—we have watched with childish but observant eyes the changes of fashion in English gardens. We saw the "dauntless three," the *scarlet geranium*, the *yellow calceolaria* and *blue lobelia* come in and abolish all the old and long-tried friends—*pink*, *larkspur* and *lily*—and fill their place with gay but soulless lines of colour. Then came the frightful bronze *perilla*, and then as a relief in manner but not in kind, from the intolerable tyranny of the gaudy commonplace, came the era of the finikin gardener with his carpet bedding and careful ingenious wearinesses. Then, when the land was filled with loathing, when no lady thought of handling a trowel, and all that was of interest in the garden was the colour of parasols in the sun, then came the great reaction, and heroes were found who boldly said, "this is not gardening, but slavery, let us dare to plant a wild garden." And like the red terror of France the incubus fell at a touch, leaving only the Italian garden, as an effect of bright colour and appropriate neatness, immediately in front of the house.

But just at this time travel to Switzerland was becoming more easy, and hotels were rising, and it was considered correct to take a holiday abroad, and people began to visit the Alps in June, and there for the first time they knew what the wealth of wild flowers could be. And they yearned to possess them, and sent and brought them home, and the delight spread, for it was founded upon a true and natural basis, and collectors went forth and searched all the high places of the earth, and books were written and the whole land began to buzz with a new joy; for the work is the apotheosis of the ladies' trowel—no digging possible, no forking nor hoeing, and no vile composts. Also it is generally and properly lifted above the level, so kneeling is not required; and it is specially suited to ladies and very botanical and scientific men, and all unite both at home and abroad in the fascinating work, and chords of mutual interest and perhaps friendship are instantly struck by the simple question, "How do you manage the *androsaces*?" or "Have you succeeded in flowering *galax aphylla*?" And this delightful hobby has, as the Americans say, "come to stay," for the varieties of pretty dwarf plants are numbered by thousands, and the cry is and will be "still they come."

For an Alpine Garden does not mean those varieties only which are found in Switzerland, though those are sufficient if required, but all plants are included which are perennial, dwarf, beautiful or interesting, and from the high mountain levels of the whole world—and thus we are introduced to the first two educational points of our garden.

The Alpine Garden as a study of beauty.—What is beauty? Is it colour?—it is here. Is it form?—it is here. Is it variety? Is it these with rarity? These with value? These with structure and adaptation so marvellous that we are left dumb and can only repeat in helpless bewilderment:—

"All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful,
The Lord God made them all."

The beauty of garden colour.—Faint in spring, but starred with gems as the *snowdrop* breaks through the green carpet of *arenaria* or *saxifrage*, followed by the purple and gold of the *crocus*, the sweet blue of the *chionodoxa*, and all the varied wealth of early bulbs. Then the bright glow of April, sparkling with new colours each day till May and June break in the full splendour of a shattered rainbow; and on through July, with its *veronicas* and *sedums;* on to August, still bright and gay and varied, each day a new joy, as plants from southern latitudes begin to unfold, till autumn comes, and even winter, and still there are new flowers to open in their own season. And what is there of old that can compare with this? The question is too foolish to wait for an answer.

The beauty of colour in flowers.—From an educational point of view, this subject is most difficult, for we ought to be able, in some measure, to lay down the law; while, in fact, at the present time we are tossed in a stormy sea of conflicting inferences, and no sooner do we feel firm ground for theory, as we fondly hope, than up spring an array of opposing observations which leave us in a more helpless maze than we were before. When Darwin suggested that colour was gained by natural selection to attract insects, the idea was hailed as a solution of the problem; but in face of the careful experiments with bees and butterflies, where is the

theory now? Not dead, it is true, but taking a modest place with others, and all waiting more fact and experiment. Yet surely this would introduce a high form of education: the contrast between the confident and empiric science of old, and the patient hesitating attitude of the scientific men of our day. What bee or butterfly insists on the deep blue of *gentiana acaulis*, opening dark against the snow of the snow line? and if for contrast, why should *gentiana verna* (bluest of all blue things) be so bright and *G. bavarica* paint itself with white in the centre? Does the astonishing brilliance of Alpine flowers depend upon a struggle for attention at a height where insects are so few, and the flowering season so short, that everything is at high pressure? Possibly so: we shall know presently; but meanwhile the endless speculation is full of interest and education, ranging to all subjects and touching every science; and the beauty of these plants is so great that none can lose their beauty-sense in the interest of the scientist, or the joy of the collector, or fall to the depth of the critic who only enjoyed a sunset as it reminded him of this or that picture by Turner or Danby. No fear of that in an Alpine garden: the scene changes too fast, and imagination roves from the star clusters of the cliffs to the colour carpets of the valley meadows, where

"Waves of grass break into foam of flowers"—*Swinburne;*
"And cuckoo buds of every hue,
Do paint the meadows with delight."—*Shakespere.*

And for the time poor science has to take a back seat, and that is excellent discipline, for in these days she is getting a little too bumptious.

Let us illustrate the beauty of variety by the *saxifrages*, and imagine some very superior person set as a task to ring the changes of white in a small star flower of a given shape. How late, or rather how soon, would the brush be laid down to plead for relief? But in the *saxifrage* tribe alone, of three hundred or more varieties, no two flowers are alike, and most are white or spotted with pink, but in such endless variety of difference that this tribe alone may be taken to form a garden of surpassing interest as a "harmony in white." Nor would it be without colour in the yellow of our own *hirculus, azoides, luteo purpurea, Burseriana Boydei, sancta,* etc.; nor the purple reds of the beautiful *oppositifolia* section; nor the pinks of the big *megasea* group; nor the lovely pink cushions of the *hypnoides*, and many others.

The variety of green cushions, small and great, so beautiful in their dense green and soft curves at all times, that we almost grudge the short interval when the cushion is lost in its flowers. Contrast the notes of change between the round grey hillocks of the encrusted *saxifrages* of frosted silver, *aizoon, cæsia, cochlearis*, etc., with the bright green of *Sax Frederic Augusti*, or the dark density of *herniaria glabra*, or the perfection of a tuft of *armeria cæspitora* or *silene acaulis*, apart from all questions of flowers. Then most of these cushions call for care and intelligence in keeping them perfect, for they are apt to leave bare places in the centre, which spoil the effect, and are caused by drought killing the part which is oldest (the middle), or from the soil in that part being quite exhausted. Then a little good soil added and a bit of the plant taken off and dibbled in, if a free-growing plant, or soil put in with the point of a knife and the plant pressed up together, if an encrusted *saxifrage*, makes it all compact and perfect for another year or two.

The interest of rarity.—This subject is specially educational as it is based upon exact lines, and is not vague and floating, like the sense of beauty. For rarity depends upon two things only, either special adaptation of the plant to one only climate, soil, or position, or difficulty of increase under cultivation, and for both these peculiarities there are definite reasons, which are easy to describe though not easy to circumvent. On looking over a nurseryman's catalogue we can apply a key which will rarely fail. Plants at 6*d*. or 9*d*., or by the dozen, these if we get them we shall certainly have by this time next year, and divide them at large. Plants at 1*s*. 6*d*. Be cautious, ask for information as to soil, etc. Plants at 2*s*. 6*d*. Things of beauty, probably, but far from joys for ever. Will a month see the end of them in winter, or a week in summer? But let us be reasonable, for it is not always so. The plant may be very slow of increase, or very rare but quite hardy and strong, when you *do* get it, like the singular and beautiful *phyteuma comosum*, which is more like a medusa than a flower. Or it may be a novelty, and so command a high price for a time. Or it may be rare because it will not produce offsets, nor ripen seed in this country, for want of

sunheat, like many plants from Spain and South Europe, such as *æthionemas* and the beautiful *edraianthi*.

Such plants must have full blaze and perfect drainage, and then they do perfectly, though at 2*s*. 6*d*. But take the instance of such plants as *eritrichium nanum*, the fairy *forget-me-not* of the Alps. This exquisite little blue star is not rare, but it is practically impossible ever to keep it in England—unless we could freeze it up for nine months of the year. For it wakes up in June from its sleep as the snow melts, rushes into flower and seed, then down comes the snow in September, and "good-night *eritrichium*" for another nine months' rest. Here it simply rots, whatever you do, dry or wet, and naturally so. Take the case of the beautiful series of the *moraine saxifrage oppositifolia* class, not our own native one, that is easy enough to do of course, but those from the various Alpine *moraines*, such as *pyreniaca*, *kochii*, *biflora*, etc. There they live and creep on the edge of the *moraine*, where the melting snow is always depositing the fine dust scattered by wind and meteoric showers, and feeding the plant with an ever fresh diet of food and cool water. How can we imitate that? If we could supply an endless trickle of mud and grit, which might be possible, how could we keep it cool in the sun as in the home of the plant—how indeed—and so we fail with it and others, from no fault of our own. But when a plant is rare, by position, as those which only grow in one spot in the whole world, such as *shortia galacifolia*, with its pretty fringed flowers, it is possible that after a while we may find out how to grow it freely and make it quite plentiful, though dear at present. This *shortia* is quite a romance in plants, like the stories of some orchids, though in their case the story is often tragical. The flower was dried in the Herbarium and lost for fifty years. But the tradition remained that it was found somewhere in California, and some little time ago a party of enthusiastic botanists arranged a delightful excursion to look for it. The pleasure of the quest was crowned by the discovery of the plant in a valley of low trees, and now we have to see whether it is shy or amenable to culture, and if so the price will soon come down, for the rule is a good guide.

Imitation in Alpine plants.—On this head we can say little in comparison with other branches of natural history, for living so far aloft the plants are almost out of reach of injury, except by wandering goats, and there are few insects. We have no such instances as we find among caterpillars, or the buff tip moth at rest, its wings of silver grey rolled round to resemble a broken stick, with the yellow mottled thorax at one end for the broken wood, the very ring of bark marked, and the same at the other end as a yellow painted disc on the wing tips. Or the gleaming azure of the great blue butterfly of the glades of the black Brazilian forest, plainly resembling a patch of the blue sky. Or our butterfly of the same order, the purple emperor of our oak woods, having the same gleaming colour, but broken with white for our varied sky.

> " Sometimes a leaf would fall, and sometimes, too,
> A little cloud would float across the blue."—*Keats* (" *Hyperion*.")

Still we have the encrusted *saxifrages* like the lichen of the rock in their silvery rosettes.

> " Like a rock with mosses on it,
> Spotted brown and grey with mosses."—"*Hiawatha*."

And the whole tribe of fifty house leeks (*sempervivums*), which all have much the same flower on a different rosette, like Queen Elizabeth, who had one face but a different dress for every day of the year. And many painted and silvery sedums like our own *Rhodiola*, with its silver white stems, like the sticks whitened and bleached by wind and rain.

But when we turn to the subject of *Adaptation of Alpine plants*, we feel that space will soon fail us, for the subject would include *special culture*, a treatise by itself, and habits of hanging, and deep rooting, and holding on, and nestling, and all are food for much intelligent observation.

On the subject of culture, all we can say is, that all gardening culture of the class of "high potting" is useful, and often necessary here. Take the potting of a high-class orchid. First you want your clean washed pot with lots of holes in it for fresh air and free water. Then your big crocks, then medium, then little crocks half way up. Then you want your fresh charcoal lumps (antiseptic). Then peat, selected, fibrous, for food and antiseptic qualities too. Then you put in your plant, and raise it above the rim of the pot, to drain the crown. Then you surface with sphagnum moss, fresh and green, because of its damp holding yet non-decaying properties. All these essentials in principle it is well to think of in planting any risky and troublesome thing, such as many of the downy *androsaces* like a *glacialis*, in their rocky cleft; or when easy to keep alive, such as *linnœa borealis*, to imitate the natural surroundings as the only way to make them flower. And many plants insist upon certain conditions, not difficult but essential. Suppose you take the pretty rosy purple *erinus Alpinus*, and plant it firmly in a *level* bed, with all possible devotion, feeding it "with careful dirt," as Tennyson says. Presently you go to look at it, and it is gone, hopelessly dead and withered. But while you say philosophically with the Scotchman, "bang goes saxpence," looking up behold the little coquette sitting on the top of a *bare* rock all in flower, laughing at you, rocking in the wind, and just holding on by one toe in a microscopic crack. And so of many things, but when we turn to the *adaptation of form* we can often follow it through gradual stages, as though nature worked tentatively, securing one foothold before advancing the next. See the first idea of a dead leaf in the lappet moth at rest. Then a dead leaf with a hole torn in it, in the gamma moth at rest, with the curved edges of the leaf. Then the comma butterfly, at rest, with its wings closed, on a post, a plain dead leaf, with a long jag for the stalk, and the bright silver comma to represent a torn hole. Then the perfection of the Queen of Spain frittillary, with the great silver discs on the under side, and the cut edges representing, when at rest, a leaf torn and riddled by wind and rain, and the light shining through the torn holes. So in the bog garden end of our Alpine pleasaunce we can see the two hardy carnivorous pitcher plants, *sarracenia purpurea* and *Darlingtonia Californica*, showing the gradual stages of advance. The *sarracenia*, with its tube like leaves open at top, still shows the doors at the top which used to close upon the prey. But probably the plant found that it cost less nervous energy to develop intoxicating liquor in the bottom of the tube than to keep the door apparatus at work, so the doors fell out of use, and the flies crowd into some, such as *sarracenia Drummondi*, in such numbers, that the tube of 18 inches is quite full and rots away, and the young tubes have to be plugged with cotton wool to keep the flies out. But in

Darlingtonia the liquor does not seem to be very strong, and the plant found that some flies crawled out, but it did not seem on that account to revert to its doors, which remain closed, but it turned its tube over at the top like a hood or bell, and swelled it like the hood of a cobra, and thus turned the aperture to the under side, making it much more difficult for the flies to escape. But even this did not seem enough, so it made a skylight in the top of the hood, to attract and retain the flies till they succumbed to the fumes.

But the appointed space is closing in, and we have not yet got to *the geographical aspect*, the most important of all, for in an Alpine Garden we illustrate all the ends of the earth, and we can have the lovely *calandrinia umbellata* from the high lands of tropic Brazil side by side with *leptinella scariosa*, the last plant found in the frozen desolation of the South Pole; or, *epilobium fleischeri* from the boiling springs of Iceland, with *aciphyllas* from New Zealand or *nierembergia* from India. For the high mountains of the tropics correspond in temperature with the sea-level of higher latitudes, and so with judgment we can grow many apparently impossible things.

Then if perforce we cut this subject very short, we are confronted with the *Natural history of the Alpine Garden*—Toads, ants, millipedes, wireworms, cats, starlings, slugs and snails. A treatise on each, and especially on varieties of slugs and snails with their curious rotation of seasons, and where they go in the intervals, and how to guard against them—but no puzzle would be so great as being compelled to find out a place to stop, in the "Alpine Garden as a means of education."

H. B., 1897.

PARENT AND TEACHER: HOME AND SCHOOL.

BY LILIE J. CHUDLEIGH.

(*Continued from page* 582.)

FROM about fourteen to eighteen many girls are at school at a distance from their homes, and during this period, often the most impressionable of a girl's life, personal intercourse with her parents is limited to the holidays. Such being the case, the importance of this period to the parents for keeping and increasing their influence over their children is incalculable.

Separated for months at a time from home and its duties, the latter are apt to be lost sight of, and when the time comes to resume them they appear irksome and distasteful or perhaps merely unnecessary or trivial. The life of a boarding-school is to the majority of girls both interesting and stimulating, and while for many reasons the advantages of such a life are considerable, there exists a very real danger that a quiet home life may appear by contrast dull and devoid of interest. The great safeguard against this is the hold which the home should retain on the mind and heart of a girl by means of her periodical holiday visits to it. Besides the general principles which I have indicated, there is one special point that it is desirable to insist on, especially with girls, that is that each one should have a definite duty in connection with the life of the home, which she performs regularly during the holidays, and only resigns as it were temporarily on returning to school. I believe it is difficult to overestimate the strength of such an apparently slender tie; it appeals so strongly to the imagination and the emotions that it becomes a part of the very life of a girl.

The work of a boarding-school must of necessity touch the life of the pupils at more points and more deeply than that of a day-school. For the time, school and home have to be